

Camas loses a treasured citizen

Today, Camas is without one of its most unique and influential figures.

Hal Zimmerman, former publisher of the Camas-Washougal Post-Record for 23 years, state legislator for 20 years and community activist most of his life, recently fought a difficult battle against Parkinson's disease, the affliction that ultimately took his life on Thursday, Aug. 4.

Over the decades, Zimmerman had been described as "having a reverence for the printed word," "hard working," "accessible to the people," "a dedicated public servant," and "caring, kind and respectful." His far-reaching impact on the community was illustrated in 2006, when he was named the "Citizen of the Century" by the Camas-Washougal Chamber of Commerce.

When I joined the Post-Record in 2000, it had been two decades since Zimmerman had served as the newspaper's publisher, but it was clear to me after only a very short time that this man was an institution in this business, and most importantly in this community that had only recently become my home.

What I witnessed from Zimmerman during the years that followed proved my initial impressions.

He had a deep love for Camas and the people who helped it grow and change in positive ways. In fact, he was one of them. His efforts to make Camas a great place for current and future generations were not limited to his work and influence at the newspaper, or service in the State House or State Senate. He continued to be an active and vital citizen throughout his life, stepping up to help create the Camas Educational Foundation, and revitalize downtown Camas with his work on the Downtown Vision Coalition — to name just a couple of his endeavors that always seemed to have the greater good in mind.

During his 88 years, Zimmerman was dealt the highs and lows that a fully complete life can offer. He truly helped mold and create the personality of Camas that exists today — permanently part of the fiber of this community.

I will no longer see him from my office window as he joins the weekly Friday coffee hour at the Chamber of Commerce, or receive his phone calls to listen as his unmistakable voice delivers encouraging words, questions, constructive critiques, story ideas and historical perspectives on community events and people.

His presence will certainly be missed by me and the many people who knew him.

But as another longtime local resident Clifford Duncan explained so well in an article in today's Post-Record, what remains after his death are the "trails and pathways" Zimmerman helped to forage. In a word, his "legacy."